

Need for Nursing Literature

To the Editor:

Among the refugee population in Germany, Austria, Italy and the Middle East there are many hundreds of nurses and midwives for whom no provision can be made for nursing text-books or periodicals. These nurses are engaged in hospital or sanatorium duty or in public health work in the refugee camps, and all hope that they will ultimately be resettled in their profession in new countries, and therefore appeal through your pages to nurses throughout the world for donations of nursing literature both to assist them in their current duties, and to keep them informed of modern thinking in the desirable nursing world outside the refugee camps.

Donations of nursing literature published in English, German or French will be gratefully received, and should be addressed to the Chief Nurse, PCIRO Headquarters, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Thanking you in anticipation of your assistance in publishing this appeal.

J. S. Haines, Chief Nurse for R. L. Coigny, M.D., Director of Health.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

The London Letter

(From our own correspondent)

THE B.M.A. MOVES

The second plebiscite organized by the British Medical Association has shown that, though still divided on the subject, an increased number of doctors are prepared to co-operate in the working of the new health scheme. As the figures did not show the majority of 13,000 general practitioners against acceptance of the scheme the B.M.A. had decided was necessary to justify the profession in refusing to co-operate in the scheme, the Council of the Association recommended the representative body of the Association to advise the profession to co-operate in the scheme. This recommendation was keenly debated at a special meeting of the representative body, but in the end it was accepted, although a rider was added that the profession only accepted service under the Act on the understanding that, in the event of the amending Act and terms of service being unsatisfactory, members serving under the Act should hand in their resignations or take such other steps as were considered necessary by the representative body.

POSTPONEMENT?

Thus ends the penultimate stage of one of the most controversial episodes in the history of the medical profession in this country. The omens for the success of the Act are far from promising. The scheme is due to come into force on July 5, but little of the essential preliminary spadework has been accomplished. Terms of remuneration have not yet been settled; certain legal anomalies have not yet been cleared up, and there are no grounds for believing that the enabling Act promised by the Government can possibly reach the Statute Book by the appointed day. When, in addition, it is appreciated that there is an acute shortage of nurses resulting in many hospital beds being unusable, and that general practitioners are already rushed off their feet with work, the possibility of chaos does not appear very remote.

Impressed by the urgency of the situation, Sir Frederick Menzies, the distinguished former Medical Officer of Health of the London County Council, has appealed, in the columns of *The Times*, to the Minister of Health to postpone the introduction of the scheme

until January 1, 1949. That he is voicing the opinion of all responsible sections of the community, both medical and non-medical, is abundantly clear, but whether this opinion is synonymous with that of the Cabinet is another matter, and one upon which it should be possible to give an opinion next month.

CENTENARY OF PUBLIC HEALTH

With the characteristic British gift of never allowing political rancour to embitter public life, the heated controversy over the National Health Scheme has not been allowed to interfere with the celebration of the centenary of the passing of the first great English Public Health Act. As was only fitting, the lead in the celebrations was taken by the City of London, the first medical officer of health of which was Sir John Simon, whose name, along with that of Chadwick, stands pre-eminent in the annals of public health in this country. At a dinner in the library at the historic Guildhall the toast of the evening was proposed by Mr. Aneurin Bevan who had among his audience three former Ministers of Health—Lord Addison, Lord Kennet and Mr. Ernest Brown. The official celebrations had been initiated the previous day by Princess Elizabeth in opening a special exhibition organized by the Government to mark the occasion. By a sad coincidence these celebrations have been followed by the announcement of the death, at the age of 77, of Sir George Newman who, as chief medical officer of the Ministry of Health from 1919 to 1935, proved to be one of Sir John Simon's greatest successors.

THE TRAINING OF DOCTORS

Under this title the medical curriculum committee of the British Medical Association has just published a report which provides much food for thought. This committee, which has been sitting since 1945 under the chairmanship of Professor Henry Cohen of Liverpool, had a strong representation of general practitioners as well as teachers and consultants. Predominantly clinical in its outlook, it takes a strong line on the need for drastic revision of the pre-clinical period. Some of the comments it feels called upon to make are a sad commentary upon the present methods of medical education, e.g., "Examiners must be competent for, and experienced in their duties".

So many similar reports have been published of recent years, with so little attempt to carry them into force, that many are becoming rather cynical as to their real value, but it is to be hoped that the contents of this report, taken in conjunction with the so-called Good-enough Report published some years ago, will at last impel the powers that be to take adequate action to ensure that the standards of medical education are at least such as would be worthy of the high standing of the universities of which our medical schools form integral parts. Too often at the present day the difference between a university and a technical college is not appreciated. Until this is done, and until it is recognized that the Faculty of Medicine is an essential part of a university, there is little hope of our maintaining the high standing of the medical profession in this country.

WILLIAM A. R. THOMSON

London, June, 1948.

Perhaps the most deadly form of fear is that which holds a person back from seeking early professional attention for an ailment. One of the worst features of cancer, for instance, is the fear it instils into people. Cancer can be cured, in most cases, and this is true of the majority of troubles. But all have to be attacked early. The thing to dread, is not the disease itself but the fear which paralyses the initiative to do the obvious—that is, to get help to fight it, at once.